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Message Text

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ACTION INR-10

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 EA-10 ISO-00 PM-05 NSC-05 SP-02
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INFO AMEMBASSY BANGKOK
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AMEMBASSY PARIS
AMCONSUL HONG KONG
CINCPAC

S E C R E T VIENTIANE 0235

CINCPAC FOR POLAD

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PINR PEPR VM LA US CH UR
SUBJECT: LAO AND VIETNAMESE ATTITUDES TOWARD SINO-AMERICAN RELATIONS

REF: A INR REPORT NO. 916, FEBRUARY 1,1978,
B STATE 036614

1. THE REFERENCED INR REPORT ARGUES THAT "LAOS WOULD PROBABLY BE PLEASED BY A NORMALIZED US-PRC RELATIONSHIP, BELIEVING THAT IT MIGHT LEAD TO NORMALIZED US-VIETNAMESE RELATIONS AND AID TO LAOS." WHILE THIS ARGUMENT IS LOGICAL BY STANDARD WESTERN ANALYSIS, "LOGIC" MAY BE DIFFERENT FOR LAO AND (AND VIETNAMESE) LEADERS WHO HAVE FOUGHT AGAINST THE U.S. AND ITS ALLIES FROM CAVES AND JUNGLES FOR THIRTY YEARS. WHILE UNDOUBTABLY THERE ARE "PRAGMATISTS" IN BOTH THE LAO AND VIETNAMESE LEADER-SHIPS, THERE PRESUMABLY ARE ALSO IDEOLOGUES WHOSE DOCTRINAIRE OPPOSITION TO THE U.S. WOULD RENDER THEM

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HOSTILE TO IMPROVEMENT OF U.S. RELATIONS WITH ANY COUNTRY IN THE REGION.

2. LEADERS WITH PRO-SOVIET LEANINGS IN EITHER THE LAO OR VIETNAMESE RULING CIRCLES PRESUMABLY ALSO WOULD LOOK WITH DISFAVOR ON NORMALIZATION OF SINO-AMERICAN RELATION-TIONS.

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3. THE PAPER, IN ADDRESSING ITSELF TO THE SRV ATTITUDE STATES THAT: (A) "HANOI MAY FEAR THAT DETERIORATED U.S. RELATIONS WITH PEKING MIGHT LEAD TO (B) HEIGHTENED PRC-USSR COMPETITION FOR INFLUENCE IN SOUTHEAST ASIA AND(C) A REDUCTION IN HANOI'S ABILITY TO PLAY OFF THE TWO COMMUNIST SUPER POWERS." IT WOULD APPEAR THAT (B) DOES NOT NECESSARILY FOLLOW FROM (A) AND THAT (C) DOES NOT NECESSARILY FOLLOW FROM (B). A DETERIORATION IN U.S.-PRC RELATIONS MIGHT WEAKEN THE PRC TO THE EXTENT THAT IT WOULD BE FORCED TO SEEK A DIPLOMATIC RETRENCH-MENT. RECENTLY, SOME U.S. LEADERS HAVE ARGUED SPECIFI-CALLY THAT A FAILURE BY THE U.S. AND PRC TO REACH AN AGREEMENT ON NORMALIZATION OF RELATIONS SOON MIGHT INDUCE THE PRC TO CONSIDER A TIME-BUYING REAPPROCHEMENT WITH THE SOVIETS. EITHER OR BOTH DEVELOPMENTS WOULD PRESUMABLY MEAN A COOLING OF THE PRC-SOVIET RIVALRY IN SOUTHEAST ASIA, RATHER THAN "HEIGHTENED PRC-USSR COMPETITION." IN ADDITION, IT SEEMS ENTIRELY POSSIBLE THAT (B) "HEIGHTENED PRC-USSR COMPETITION FOR INFLUENCE IN SOUTHEAST ASIA" WOULD NOT RESULT IN (C) "A REDUCTION IN HANOI'S ABILITY TO PLAY OFF THE TWO COMMUNIST POWERS." HEIGHTENED PRC-USSR COMPETITION IN THE SOUTH-EAST ASIAN AREA WOULD PRESUMABLE INCREASE THE VALUE OF THE SRV'S SUPPORT AND PLACE THE VIETNAMESE IN A BETTER BARGAINING POSITION FOR AID AND TRADE CONCESSIONS, ETC.,

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THUS INCREASING HAJOI'S ABILITY TO PLAY OFF THE TWO.

4. ON THE OTHER HAND, A WARMING CU U.S. -PRC RELATIONS MIGHT EXACERBATE PEKING'S RELATIONSHIP WITH "LIBERATION MOVEMENTS" IN SOUTHEAST ASIA WHOSE FRONT LINE PURISM MIGHT CAUSE THEM TO REGARD A PRC REAPPROCHEMENT WITH THE U.S. AS APOSTASY. SUCH A DEVELOPMENT WOULD PROBABLY BENEFIT VIETNAM, WHICH IS COMPETING WITH THE CHINESE FOR INFLUENCE AMONG SEVERAL OF THESE MOVEMENTS, NOTABLY IN THAILAND.

5. NEITHER LAO NOR VIETNAMESE MEDIA HAVE MADE ANY SIGNIFICANT EDITORIAL COMMENT OR REPORTED ANY OFFICIAL STATEMENT ON US-PRC RELATIONS IN RECENT MONTHS.
ROBERTS

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